

Escape Arts Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy

1. Definitions

A vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18 years who:

- Is or may be in need of/eligible for Community Care Services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness.
- AND/OR is unable to take care of him/herself/themselves.
- OR is unable to protect him/herself/themself from significant harm or exploitation.
- AND/OR the adult's circumstances is unable to be altered or improved without direct assistance.

A vulnerable person may fall into any one of the following groups: older and frail people; people with a mental health need, a learning difficulty, a physical impairment, a sensory impairment; people who are substance or alcohol dependent; people who have been displaced or are vulnerable as a result of their socio-economic circumstance or family carers providing assistance to another vulnerable adult.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other persons(s) or group of people. Abuse may be single or repeated acts. It can be:

- Physical: for example, hitting, slapping, burning, pushing, restraining or giving the wrong medication.
- Psychological and emotional: for example, shouting, swearing, frightening, blaming, ignoring or humiliating a person, threats of harm or abandonment, intimidation, verbal abuse.
- Financial: including the illegal or unauthorised use of a person's property, money, pension book or other valuables, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance.
- Sexual: such as forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without his or her informed consent – this can occur in any relationship.
- Discriminatory: including racist or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's disability, age or illness, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment. This also includes stopping someone from being involved in religious or cultural activity, services or support networks;
- Institutional: the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. This includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff,

supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other providers of care.

- Neglect and acts of omission: including ignoring medical or physical care needs. These can be deliberate or unintentional, amounting to abuse by a carer or self-neglect by the vulnerable person: for example, where a person is deprived of food, heat, clothing, comfort or essential medication, or failing to provide access to appropriate health or social care services.

Domestic Violence and abuse is any type of hurt taking place between adults who are close to each other (this might be between parents, boyfriend and girlfriend or within families). Sometimes it can result in physical violence, but can also be emotional abuse, financial abuse or sexual abuse. Domestic violence and abuse can happen to anyone. Listed below are different types of abuse:

- Hitting, slapping, pulling hair, biting and kicking
- Name calling, bullying, controlling what the other person does (mental / emotional abuse)
- Controlling or taking all the money, not letting the other person work
- Forcing the person to have sex, touching them against their will.

A **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is a person in Escape Arts who has received training to lead on the implementation of Escape Arts' Safeguarding & Child Protection Policies. They are the first port of call with regards to raising any safeguarding concerns, reporting safeguarding concerns/crimes and providing support to anyone in the team who has had to report a safeguarding concern. As of July 2023, Escape Arts employ two Designated Safeguarding Leads who support the implementation of this policy. These employees are the Operations Manager and Arts Award Coordinator.

2. Statement of Policy

Escape Arts is committed to keeping vulnerable adults safe from harm and exploitation and to uphold their rights, always acting in their best interests and with the consent of individuals (*in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998.*)

Safeguarding is everybody's business - Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. We will work together to prevent and minimise abuse. If we have concerns that someone is being abused, our loyalty to the vulnerable person comes before anything else – our group, other service users, our colleagues and the person's friends and family.

Doing nothing is not an option - If we know or suspect that a vulnerable adult is being abused, we will do something about it and ensure our work is properly recorded. We will work within the boundaries of the Warwickshire Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) Procedures. A Whistleblowing Policy is in place if staff members are concerned that a

safeguarding concern is not being acted upon appropriately. *Please see Escape Arts Staff Handbook for more information.*

Escape Arts recognises its responsibilities under the Care Act 2014, which is the primary legislation governing the safeguarding of adults in England. In accordance with Section 42 of the Care Act, local authorities have a duty to make enquiries, or cause others to do so, if they reasonably suspect that an adult:

- has needs for care and support,
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse or neglect.

Escape Arts commits to supporting this statutory duty by identifying and reporting concerns promptly and effectively, ensuring all safeguarding referrals are shared with the relevant local authority and/or Adult Social Care team as appropriate.

Escape Arts will also cooperate fully with the Warwickshire Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and its partners, in line with the Care Act's requirement for organisations to work together to protect adults at risk. This includes sharing information, contributing to safeguarding enquiries when requested, and adopting policies and procedures that align with the multi-agency safeguarding framework set out by the SAB.

Escape Arts will therefore ensure that:

- The welfare of the vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, gender identity, language, ethnicity, religious beliefs and/or sexual orientation, have the right to protection from abuse.
- The needs of disabled adults and others who may be particularly vulnerable will be taken into account.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff (paid/unpaid) working within the project have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person (Programme Manager, Project Coordinator, Designated Safeguarding Leads, CEO and/or Deputy CEO).

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all those who work for or volunteer with Escape Arts and third parties, whether part time or full time on a substantive or fixed-term contract:

- All employees, including sessional staff.
- Artists and other freelance contractors
- Volunteers
- Work experience placements/trainees

For the purpose of this policy, references to members of staff may also refer to the roles referenced above.

This policy applies to all staff regardless of whether they have regular contact with vulnerable adults. Escape Arts expect all people working for the organisation, volunteering, or attending events & workshop sessions to be treated with the same dignity and respect, and have equal access to any of Escape Arts' services, as any other adult. *For more information, see Escape Arts Equality, Inclusion & Diversity Policy.*

All staff and volunteers must have DBS checks before beginning employment with Escape Arts and before any direct contact with vulnerable adults or their carers. All staff and volunteers will be requested to read Escape Arts Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedure and will undertake safeguarding training as part of the Escape Arts Induction. Staff members receive accredited Safeguarding Training annually and volunteers are also offered an annual refresher training session on this policy.

4. Escape Arts' Commitments to Vulnerable Adults

- To provide access to information, activities and knowledge – all vulnerable adults will have access to information that they can understand to make an informed choice, including access to expert knowledge and advocacy, as required and enable them to take part in all activities and events.
- Offer Choices – all vulnerable adults will have the opportunity to select independently from a range of options based on clear and accurate information.
- Confidentiality – all vulnerable adults will know that information about them is managed appropriately and there is a clear understanding of confidentiality and its limits among staff/volunteers.
- Consent – all vulnerable adults have the right to be supported to make their own decisions and to give or withhold their consent to an activity or service. Consent is a clear indication of a willingness to participate in an activity or to accept a service. It may be signalled verbally, by gesture, by willing participation or in writing. No one can give, or withhold, consent on behalf of another adult unless special provision for particular purposes has been made for this, usually by law.
- Dignity and respect – all vulnerable adults will be given the same respect and dignity as any other adult, by recognising their uniqueness and personal needs.

- Equality and diversity – all vulnerable adults will be treated equally and their background and culture will be valued and respected.
- Fulfilment – all vulnerable adults will be invited to engage in activities and offered services that enable them to fulfil their ability and potential.
- Independence – all vulnerable adults will have as much control as possible over their lives whilst being safeguarded against unreasonable risks.
- Privacy – all vulnerable adults will be free from unnecessary intrusion into their affairs; and there will be a balance between the individual's own safety and the safety of others.
- Safety – all vulnerable adults will feel safe, and live without fear of violence, neglect or abuse in any form.
- Support – all vulnerable adults will be supported to report any form of abuse and to receive appropriate support following abuse for as long as may be required.

When vulnerable adults are referred to Escape Arts, there is a referral process in place to identify support needs for them (*please see appendix 1*). This allows Escape Arts to work with the vulnerable adult and their carer to produce a Personal Care Plan where necessary to ensure they are supported and that there is a plan in place to safeguard the vulnerable adult and other members of the group in case of any incident during project sessions. For more information, please see Escape Arts Code of Conduct, which outlines the access and referral process for vulnerable adults and new participants.

5. Escape Arts Safeguarding Commitments

To ensure a safe environment for vulnerable adults, Escape Arts operates:

- A Safeguarding process for all staff & volunteers working with vulnerable adults which recognises and responds to, recording and reporting concerns about abuse.
- A recruitment process that ensures that all staff who have regular, direct and unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults are carefully selected and have a current DBS check.
- Management, support, supervision and training of staff/volunteers.
- A risk assessment procedure.
- A rigorous management of records, confidentiality and sharing of information.
- A complaints procedure in place that can be used if there are any concerns.
- A Code of Conduct for all groups that every participant must sign prior to joining an Escape Arts project. This is a signed agreement which includes treating everyone equally and with respect and in the case of online projects, agreeing not to share personal information about other participants and using their contact information outside of project sessions (*for more information, see Section 8: Vulnerable Adults and E-Safety Policy*).

To support vulnerable adults who are experiencing, or at risk from, abuse, Escape Arts is committed to:

- Identifying the abuse of vulnerable adults where it is occurring.
- Responding effectively to any circumstances giving grounds for concern, or where formal complaints or expressions of anxiety are expressed.
- Ensuring the active participation of individuals, families, groups and communities wherever possible and appropriate.
- Raising awareness of the extent of abuse on vulnerable adults and its impact on them.
- Promoting and supporting work designed to reduce abuse and the fear of abuse as experienced by vulnerable adults.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating how our policies, procedures and practices for protecting vulnerable adults are working.
- Making sure our policies, procedures and practices stay up to date with good practice and the law in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Ensuring our procedures are in line with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures.

6. Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Procedure

Concerns about or evidence of abuse can come to us through:

- A direct disclosure by the vulnerable adult.
- A complaint or expression of concern by another member of staff, a volunteer, another service user, a carer, a member of the public or relative.
- An observation of the behaviour of the vulnerable adult by the volunteer, member of staff or carer.

Escape Arts will work with vulnerable adults in a way that meets all the aspects of confidentiality in our different policies, but where abuse to a vulnerable person is alleged, suspected, reported or concerns are raised, the Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Procedure must be followed. The confidentiality of the vulnerable person will be respected wherever possible, and their consent obtained to share information. The vulnerable person should be made aware that staff cannot ignore issues around abuse and that steps will be taken to deal with them in as sensitive a manner as possible. The welfare of the individual is paramount.

The Procedure

You think abuse has or may have occurred:

- Act immediately - it is the responsibility of the person first becoming aware of a situation where there may be a vulnerable adult subject to, or at risk of, abuse to:
 - Make Safe - deal with the immediate needs of the person. This may mean taking reasonable steps to ensure the adult is in no immediate danger and seeking medical treatment if required as a matter of urgency.
 - Do not discuss the allegation of abuse with the alleged perpetrator.

- Do not disturb or destroy articles that could be used in evidence. Where an assault of some kind is suspected do not wash or bathe the person unless this is associated with first aid treatment necessary to prevent further harm.
- If the allegation is about a staff member or volunteer of any organisation, ensure that the allegation is properly managed. This may include suspending the member(s) of staff or volunteer. The staff member or volunteer is also entitled to support at this stage. Please refer to the *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure*.
- Inform - once you have ensured that the Vulnerable Adult has been made safe;
 - Tell your Line Manager immediately and report to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and CEO/Deputy CEO if your Line Manager is unavailable or is implicated in the allegation. Staff members who are Designated Safeguarding Leads will be outlined to you during the induction.
 - Contact the police if it is thought a crime has just been committed.
- Record - record details of the allegation as soon as possible somewhere that can be kept secure. Include:
 - The allegation or concerns, including the date and time of the incident, what the vulnerable adult said about the abuse and how it occurred or what has been reported to you.
 - The appearance and behaviour of the victim.
 - Any injuries observed.

It is the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead or CEO/Deputy CEO to:

1. Decide without delay on the most appropriate course of action once the allegation or suspicion of abuse has been raised.
2. Deal with any immediate needs:
 - Ensure that the victim of the alleged abuse is safe
 - Ensure that any necessary emergency medical treatment is arranged
 - Ensure that no forensic evidence is lost
 - If the alleged perpetrator is also a vulnerable adult, ensure that a member of staff is allocated to attend to their needs and ensure that other service users are not put at risk.
3. Clarify the facts stated by the member of staff but do NOT in any circumstances discuss the allegation of abuse with the alleged perpetrator or, if possible, the victim.
4. Check that the circumstances fall within the Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy i.e. meeting the definition of abuse as defined in this Policy and Procedures.
5. Address issues of consent and confidentiality.

6. A formal referral must be made on the same day as the alert is raised wherever:

- A crime has been, could have been, or yet could be committed.
- There is a suspicion that an abuse has taken place.
- The allegation involves a member of staff or paid carer.
- Other vulnerable adults are at risk.
- The alleged perpetrator is a vulnerable adult.
- They are unsure if abuse has taken place

7. Making A Referral

To report a Safeguarding incident referring to a vulnerable adult, call the **Adult Social Care Team** who can be contacted 24 hours-a-day on: 01926 412080

The person making the referral should ideally have the following information available; however, the lack of any of this information should not delay the referral:

- The name of the vulnerable adult, date of birth and age
- Address and telephone number
- Why the adult is considered vulnerable
- Whether consent has obtained for the referral, and if not the reasons e.g. the vulnerable adult lacks mental capacity or there is an over-riding public interest (e.g. where other vulnerable adults are at risk)
- Whether there are any concerns or doubts about the mental capacity of the vulnerable adult
- Whether the police are aware of the allegation, and whether a police investigation is underway

The Adult Social Care Teams can offer advice and support to the person and/or their carers and, where necessary, arrange appropriate services.

If you think a crime may have been committed, contact **Warwickshire Police** and specify that it is a safeguarding issue (999 in an emergency).

If an adult makes a disclosure or staff member believes that the individual is experiencing domestic abuse, their Project Manager and/or CEO/Deputy CEO can make a referral to **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**.

MARAC is a multi-agency meeting which domestic abuse victims who have been identified as at high risk of serious harm or homicide are referred to. The MARAC is attended by representatives from a range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies. During the meeting relevant and proportionate information is shared about the current risks, enabling representatives to identify options to increase the safety of the victim and any other vulnerable parties such as children. The MARAC then creates a multi-agency action plan to address the identified risks and increase the safety and wellbeing of all those at risk. The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim. However, taking in to account the UK law which prioritises the safety of children, the

MARAC will also make links with other multi-agency meetings and processes to safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator.

A MARAC referral can be made without the permission of the victim if the need for intervention is high.

Witnessing a Safeguarding incident can be very upsetting. All staff members, volunteers/work experience placements and beneficiaries have the right to receive support from Escape Arts to support their mental health in the aftermath of abuse.

- Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, Email: **bac@bacp.co.uk**, Internet: **www.bap.co.uk**.
- Talk 2 someone – Tel: 0800408 1552 Opening Hours: 8:30am - 8:30pm Monday - Friday
10am - 4pm Saturday, Internet: <http://www.talk2someone.org.uk>
- Escape Arts invests in an Employee Assistance Programme for staff and volunteers to access confidential support, online counselling and wellbeing resources through Health Assured, through telephone support: **0800 047 4097 / 1800 936 710**, quoting **ESC029**, Internet: [Home | Health Assured \(healthassured.eap.co.uk\)](http://Home | Health Assured (healthassured.eap.co.uk)) and their app, Wisdom, for 24/7 live chat and support. If you do not have access to Health Assured or the Wisdom app, contact the Deputy CEO who can put you in touch with them.

8. Vulnerable Adults, Mental Ill Health and Wellbeing

Many participants attending Escape Arts services experience periods of mental ill health. All Escape Arts staff have undertaken Mental Health First Aid Training to support participants during times of mental ill health. There is also a formal procedure in place should any vulnerable adult experience mental ill health during an Escape Arts community session and support the vulnerable adult moving forward.

If a participant experiences a mental health crisis during a community session, the Project Coordinator will support the participant using their mental health first aid training. The incident must be reported to the Programme Manager and CEO/Deputy CEO in the first instance, who will contact the participant's emergency contact to inform them of the incident. The incident must be written up by the Project Coordinator or staff member who initially supported the participant at the earliest opportunity and in as much detail as possible. After the incident, the Project Coordinator will follow up with a phone call to the participant to check in and arrange a meeting with their carer or emergency contact where applicable to put a personal support plan in place to support that participant moving forward.

9. Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding & E-Safety

Escape Arts encourage staff, volunteers and participants to make appropriate use of technologies. Escape Arts is committed to embracing new learning pathways and technologies. However, it is also important that we balance this with our duties of care to our participants and staff regardless of race, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, social economic status, maternity status and human rights and be particularly mindful of vulnerable groups.

Escape Arts is committed to ensuring that all staff and participants, including vulnerable adults, children and young people within its remit of care will be able to use existing and well as up-and-coming technologies safely.

WhatsApp & Social Media:

Escape Arts uses Project WhatsApp groups to keep participants connected outside of project sessions. Project WhatsApp groups can be defined as groups set up for Escape Arts weekly projects, such as Stratford Escape and Nuneaton Escape, with both staff members and participants.

All participants must sign the Escape Arts WhatsApp Group Code of Conduct prior to being added an Escape Arts WhatsApp group. To ensure compliance with the Escape Arts General Data Protection Policy, this allows participants to give consent to sharing their phone number with other group members and agreeing not to share this information outside of the group. Every WhatsApp group must have a minimum of two Escape Arts employees in it and Escape Arts employees must not add anyone to the group who has not registered with Escape Arts and has not completed the signed Code of Conduct (*see Appendix 1*). The CEO/Deputy CEO are in all Escape Arts project WhatsApp groups with administrator status.

As members of the WhatsApp groups, all staff members must have a photo of themselves as their profile picture to ensure they are identifiable by participants.

All WhatsApp groups are monitored weekly by Escape Arts staff for inappropriate content, with any breaches of the Code of Conduct to be reported to CEO/Deputy CEO to take further action.

Escape Arts advises that personal invitations from staff to participants on social media (or vice versa) are not permitted. No initiation or acceptance of invitations from participants within the project under the age of 18 will be sanctioned. Staff are not permitted to share personal contact details with participants (such as email and phone numbers).

Online Sessions:

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Escape Arts used digital platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to continue to engage participants in projects. Whilst there are no

Escape Arts projects currently meeting online, the following guidance has been produced to ensure vulnerable adults, children and young people are safe online if online sessions were to resume in the future.

Escape Arts recognises video conferencing software as a useful tool to communicate and keep participants connected when they cannot meet in person, but guidance must be put in place to safeguard staff, volunteers and participants during these sessions:

- Any young person under 18 years of age must have written consent prior from a parent/guardian prior to joining an online call.
- There must be at least two members of Escape Arts staff present on every online call. This is particularly important when meeting with young people under the age of 18 online.
- If an online session is being recorded or a photograph is being taken during a session, written consent must be provided prior to the recording of the session (*please see Appendix 2*).
- All group members must be reminded of the Escape Arts Project Code of Conduct and ensure everyone is treated equally and with respect.
- Staff members must use online accounts connected to their Escape Arts email.

If a safeguarding incident occurs on an online call or over WhatsApp, the Safeguarding Procedure outlined in this policy (Section 6) must be followed. A Designated Safeguarding Lead must be contacted at the earliest opportunity. If you are concerned for the safety of the participant, phone 999.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

Escape Arts will review this policy annually with the HR Sub Committee and the Board of Trustees to ensure the policy is updated with the latest legislation. As at July 2025, Escape Arts employ two Designated Safeguarding Leads who support the implementation of this policy. These employees are the Operations Manager and Arts Award Coordinator.

Safeguarding learning is discussed and shared with the team as part of weekly team meetings when appropriate. Wider learning around safeguarding policy and implementation is discussed with the team as part of quarterly team training days.

Safeguarding is a standing agenda item at HR Sub-Committee Meetings to share learning and discuss policy implementation. Outside of these meetings, the Board will be informed of any safeguarding concerns that have been reported to the Adult Safeguarding Team at Warwickshire County Council. The Board will also be informed if an Escape Arts staff member has been involved in a safeguarding incident with a vulnerable adult. Members of the Escape Arts team will contact the Board directly if there has been a safeguarding incident involving the Executive or if they do not feel that a safeguarding concern has been dealt with effectively.

This Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy is supported by the following policies:

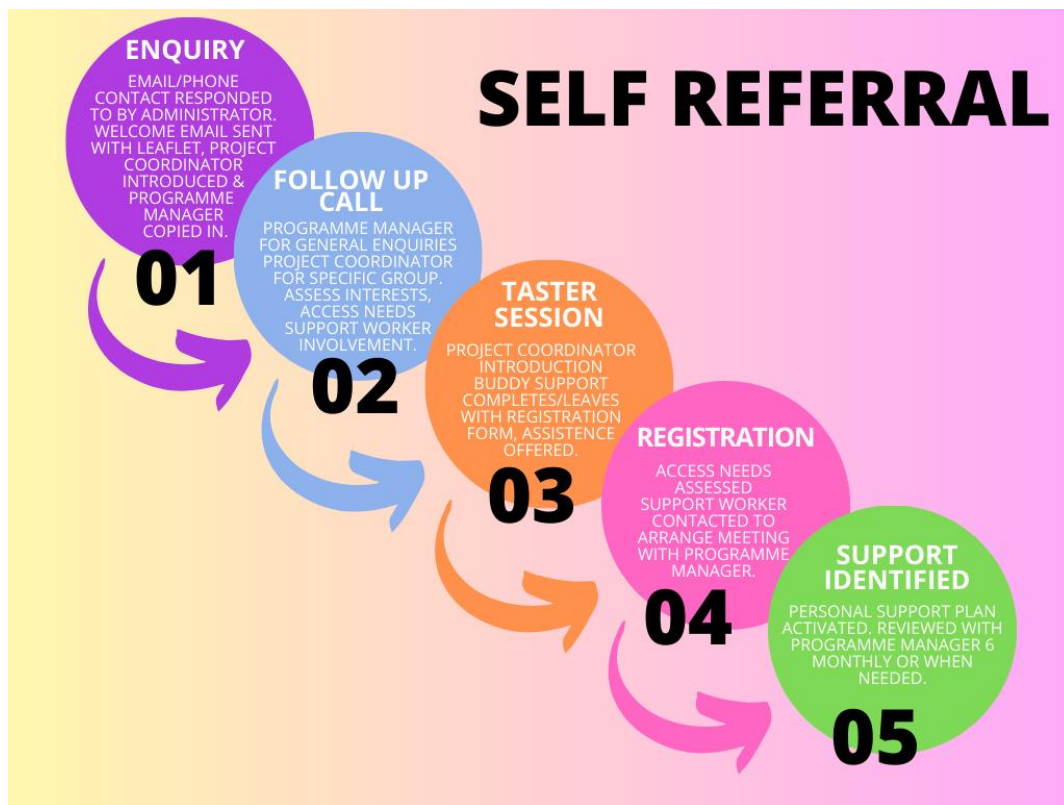
- Health and Safety Policy, including First Aid Training
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

- General Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy

This policy and procedure was reviewed and adopted on: 31st July 2025

Date for review: July 2026

Appendix 1 – Escape Arts Self-Referral Flowchart



Appendix 2 – Escape Arts Incident Reporting Flowchart

