

# FIRST STORY

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY, GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND E-SAFETY POLICY

Last revised: 1 June 2017

### CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

#### 1 Introduction

First Story is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children who come into contact with its staff and fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection.

In this Policy:

**children** means children and young people under 18, and **child** should be understood accordingly; and

**staff** means First Story employees, authors, consultants, contractors and volunteers.

This Policy applies to all staff and sets out all staff members' responsibilities when working or coming into contact with children in the course of their work for First Story (including, for example, during workshops, events, work experience or placements).

All staff are responsible for supporting their school in protecting children when they take part in First Story activities.

In addition, First Story expects its staff to comply with the child protection policy of the school in which they are working, and looks to the school to facilitate compliance with that policy. Failure to comply with this Policy, or the school's policy, will be taken extremely seriously and may result in action being taken.

Staff should refer to the Good Practice Guidelines set out in the Appendix to this Policy for guidance on what types of behaviour are acceptable and what types of behaviour are inappropriate.

#### 2 Policy statement

First Story believes that:

- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to protection from harm or abuse; and
- the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration.

First Story undertakes:

- to treat children with care, respect and dignity;
- to ensure that all staff recognise that they may be perceived by children as trusted representatives of First Story;
- to ensure that communication with children is open and clear, and that, where appropriate, records of official communication are kept;
- to identify and assess appropriately any relevant risks of its activities arranged for children;
- to investigate fully any concerns raised by staff in connection with the welfare of children who take part in First Story activities; and

- to provide suitable levels of support and training to staff consistent with their involvement with children in the workplace.

Through this Policy, First Story will ensure that:

- we practise safe recruitment by checking the suitability of staff who work with children;
- all staff are able to make informed responses to specific child protection issues;
- all staff are able to report any concerns through the appropriate channels;
- any allegations of harm or abuse or concerns over children's welfare are taken seriously and responded to promptly and appropriately by reporting them to the liaison teacher and/or another suitable representative of the school; and
- staff work closely with the school in which they are operating to comply with the school's policies (including by requiring a member of the school staff to be present at all times).

In following this Policy, staff will always be expected to maintain a sense of proportion and to protect the child's welfare as a priority.

It is not intended that this Policy should restrict staff from normal ways of working, but staff should always consider how an action or activity might be perceived, as opposed to how it is intended.

### **3 Recruitment and disclosure checks**

As stated above, First Story will ensure that they consider the suitability of all staff who work with children as part of their role at First Story. In order to do this, First Story will carry out the following checks:

- As a matter of policy, First Story conducts standard Disclosure and Barring Service (**DBS**) checks on all staff and only makes an offer of employment or engagement if the disclosures from such checks are deemed to be satisfactory. A further DBS check is required at least every three years (or more often if we deem it reasonably necessary). In each such case, First Story will conduct such further DBS check if it falls during the term of a member of staff's contract. A DBS check provides access to a range of different types of information, including, but not limited to, information held on the Police National Computer, such as convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings in England and Wales and those recorded from Scotland.
- The First Story Child Protection Officer (as defined below) will be subject to enhanced DBS checks. Enhanced DBS checks contain the same information as standard DBS checks, but with the addition of local police force information considered relevant by Chief Police Officer(s).
- In those exceptional circumstances where a situation arises in the course of employment which will entail unsupervised work with children, an enhanced DBS check will be required before the role may be undertaken.
- Where an existing staff member's role has changed to include working with children, they may be required to complete further DBS checks before undertaking those new responsibilities.
- Any member of staff who has been convicted of an offence relating to children (and/or is subject to any disciplinary action or sanction relating to children) will not be permitted to work on any activity which involves contact with children.

### **4 Vulnerable adults**

Although First Story staff do not ordinarily work with vulnerable adults, all staff should be aware that many of the issues that arise in the context of working with children (along with other issues) may arise

in the context of working with vulnerable adults. Wherever relevant, staff should consult with the Child Protection Officer about legal requirements and best practice in relation to vulnerable adults.

## **5 Child Protection Officer**

First Story has appointed its Executive Director to have overall responsibility for compliance with this Policy (the **Child Protection Officer**).

The Child Protection Officer will ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities under this Policy.

For all children's activities and events organised or approved by First Story, the Child Protection Officer will lead on child protection, raising awareness of this Policy and its guidelines among other staff and, where appropriate, the children.

The Child Protection Officer will:

- agree with the board of First Story which positions require enhanced disclosure checks;
- be the focal point for all child protection questions;
- have responsibility to provide advice and guidance to staff who during the course of their work, believe that a child may be at risk of harm and/or have concerns over a child's welfare; and
- ensure that the schools with which First Story is working make available and explain their child protection policy to relevant First Story staff.

The Child Protection Officer shall receive appropriate training and support to undertake the role.

## **6 How do I raise a concern?**

Staff should remember that they are not formally trained to deal with situations of abuse or concerns over a child's welfare or to decide whether abuse has occurred and should therefore immediately report any concerns following the procedures below.

All concerns, allegations or actual incidents under the supervision of First Story shall be promptly reported to the Child Protection Officer.

The Child Protection Officer will investigate the concerns and/or allegations and will keep appropriate written records. The Child Protection Officer will ensure that all such records are kept securely locked.

The investigation may result in external organisations such as the child's school or social services being contacted. In other instances it may result in the invoking of procedures, such as the disciplinary and/or grievance procedures.

All information in relation to such incidents should be recorded and must include as a minimum:

- the date and time of the disclosure, concern, allegation or actual abuse incident;
- details given about the incident;
- an indication of the parties involved;
- details of any action that First Story has taken; and
- details of further reporting actions (e.g. to relevant agencies and organisations).

If, for any reason, it is decided that it is not appropriate to consult with a relevant statutory agency, a full explanation must be documented.

An indication of how First Story proposes to deal with the matter will be given within 21 days, but more quickly where reasonably possible. An indication of the likely timescales involved in providing a final response will also be provided.

If it is not possible for initial enquiries to be completed within 21 days, the external specialist organisation will provide telephone feedback to explain the situation. If a decision is made not to investigate further, an explanation of the reasons for the decision will be provided.

## **7 PR events and photographs**

First Story's policy is to seek written consent from a child's parent or guardian to take and use images of any children under the supervision of First Story. Parents should be made aware of when, where and how the images may be used in order to give their informed consent.

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## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

The following are common-sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate when engaging with children, whether in the workplace or via the internet.

In the workplace

Good practice means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets). Never allow yourself to be left alone with a child. Always have a member of school staff present. There may be exceptionally rare occasions when a confidential interview or a one-to-one meeting is necessary and, in such circumstances, this should be approved with the school and the interview should be conducted in a room with an open door or visual access. Where this is not possible, the member of staff should ensure that there is another adult nearby.
- Never making gratuitous physical contact with a child. There may be occasions where a distressed participant needs comfort which may include physical comforting, and staff should use their discretion to ensure that it is appropriate and not unnecessary or unjustified contact.
- Treating all children equally, and with respect and dignity. First Story will take positive action to eliminate discrimination against any person or group of people. Staff should ensure that children are protected from discrimination on any grounds, including ability and challenge discriminating comments and behaviour. Activities should be designed to include all children and to promote positive attitudes towards differences.
- Being clear about what the objectives of the activity are before it begins and always putting the welfare of each child first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with children (e.g. it is not appropriate for staff to have an intimate relationship with a child).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Conducting yourself in a manner that sets a good example to the participants. Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol or swearing in the company of, or while responsible for, children.

- If you know that a child is participating in or attending a First Story social event or function, give careful thought to any issues that may arise and consult with the Child Protection Officer and the school in advance to best address these issues.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Never using physical force against a participant, unless it constitutes reasonable restraint to protect him/her or another person or to protect property. If it is necessary to restrain a participant because they are an immediate danger to themselves or others or to property, then the minimum amount of force should be used for the shortest amount of time. Remain calm and get the attention and support of other staff. The incident should be recorded in writing, with a witness statement (where possible), immediately afterwards.
- Always refer any problems to the Child Protection Officer and to the school.

Practices never to be sanctioned:

- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Sharing a room with a child.
- Engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Children's inappropriate use of language and/or behaviour. This should always be challenged.
- Sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allowing allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults that they can do for themselves.
- Inviting or allowing children to stay with you at your home or arranging meetings outside of First-Story-approved venues.

### **Workshop content**

Good practice means:

Sharing your workshop plans with teachers ahead of each session.

Ensuring content is age-appropriate.

Avoiding content in workshops that could be misconstrued as inappropriate for any reason.

Flagging up with First Story any workshop outcomes that may be considered inappropriate.

Via the internet

Note the vulnerability of children and young people:

- Children and young people are all vulnerable due to their young age and inexperience – especially in an online environment.

- Experience has shown that some users, including children and young people, behave in more inappropriate and, at times, extreme ways online than they would offline. Some children and young people will engage in behaviour that may place them at risk, such as giving out personal information about themselves and their family; some will act out fantasies by pretending to be someone else; some will test out their sexual identities by engaging in cyberflirting and communicating in a sexual way, and generally acting out behaviours in ways that they would not do in real life.
- In some instances, children and young people may themselves bully, harass and abuse others.

Good practice includes the following requirements:

- Never give a student your personal email address or mobile phone number.
- Never use a student's personal email address or mobile phone number.
- Do not enter into private correspondence with any student (e.g. via email or text messaging).

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY – E-SAFETY POLICY

This policy and the procedures that it underpins apply to all First Story staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students and anyone working on behalf of First Story. The overall aims of this policy are:

- to protect children and young people who receive First Story's services and who make use of information technology (such as mobile phones, games consoles and the internet) as part of their involvement with us;
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to e-safety; and
- to ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use information technology.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the children and young people who come into contact with our services is paramount and should govern our approach to the use and management of electronic communications technologies;
- 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, guardians, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to e-safety; and
- the use of information technology is an essential part of all our lives, given that:
  - it is involved in how we as an organisation gather and store information, as well as how we communicate with each other; and

- it is also an intrinsic part of the experience of our children and young people, and is greatly beneficial to all,

but it can present challenges in terms of how we use it responsibly and, if misused either by an adult or a young person, can be actually or potentially harmful to such user.

We seek to promote e-safety by:

- appointing an e-safety co-ordinator (currently First Story's Executive Director);
- developing a range of procedures that provide clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on the appropriate use of ICT;
- supporting and encouraging the young people using our service to use the opportunities offered by mobile phone technology and the internet in a way that keeps themselves safe and shows respect for others;
- supporting and encouraging parents, guardians and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online and when using their mobile phones and game consoles;
- incorporating statements about safe and appropriate ICT use into the codes of conduct both for staff and volunteers and for children and young people;
- developing an e-safety agreement for use with young people;
- using our procedures to deal firmly, fairly and decisively with any examples of inappropriate ICT use, complaints or allegations, whether by an adult or a child/young person (these may include breaches of filtering, illegal use, cyberbullying, or use of ICT to groom a child or to perpetrate abuse);
- informing parents, guardians, carers and teachers of incidents of concern as appropriate;
- reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly;
- providing adequate physical security for ICT equipment;
- ensuring that user names, log-ins and passwords are kept confidential;
- using only official email accounts provided via the organisation, and monitoring these as necessary;
- ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given;
- any social media tools used in the course of our work with children, young people and families must be risk assessed in advance by the member of staff wishing to use them;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers on ICT issues, through supervision, support and training; and
- examining and risk-assessing any emerging new technologies before they are used within the organisation.

**First Story's e-safety coordinator is the current Executive Director.**

She can be contacted at [monica.parle@firststory.org.uk](mailto:monica.parle@firststory.org.uk)

## FACEBOOK

We see our young people are, and will be, using Facebook, Twitter and other social media. First Story recognises the power of social media to transform education, but also recognises the potential hazards. We would like our students to be able to connect with one another and – if they like – with their writers in order to discuss their writing. To this end we have created a ‘Closed and Secret Group’ on Facebook, which First Story students between the ages of 14 and 18 can join. The group is hidden and cannot be seen by the general public or found in a search.

### Facebook logistics for First Story

First Story has set up a ‘First Story’ profile page. Students will need to ‘Friend’ the First Story profile in order to be accepted into the group. On asking to join the group, students will be sent an email asking for their date of birth and school. They will also be sent a message (see below) indicating that they agree to abide by the rules of the group.

Students can also be invited by other students with whom they are friends; however, the settings of the page mean that at this point the First Story admin team will be notified and the student will be sent the message below. They cannot join the group until they have agreed to the terms of the message.

First Story will store all sensitive data in accordance with our Data Protection Policy as set out in the First Story Privacy Statement.

### Adults in the Facebook group

Only First Story staff will administer the group. All First Story staff are DBS-checked and abide by First Story’s e-safety policy. First Story writers may join the group, but to do this, they will need to set up a dedicated profile for First Story. Using this profile they should not post any personal information. No adult should message a student privately at any point, but shall always be instructed to use the wall.

Adults agree:

- Only to communicate with students through the ‘secret Facebook group’ created by First Story for this purpose and never to send a private message to individual student(s), even if the functionality of the site allows it. The internet should be treated in much the same way as an offline environment.
- To protect your password, and keep your sign-in information confidential.
- Not to make ‘friends’ with students on Facebook, Snapchat, Whatsapp or any other social media sites.
- To abide by the Terms of Use on the First Story website, particularly the rules for acceptable use of the Facebook site. Report any apparent abuses of the system.
- Not to post images (e.g. videos or photos) of yourself or the students. You may submit them to the First Story team, which may decide, where appropriate, to post moderated content to the appropriate page of the Facebook site.
- Not to enter into communication about a young person’s emotional/personal life or problems.
- To think carefully about the content and tone of your messages and the fact that these can easily be forwarded (unlike a spoken remark). Ensure that your messages are compatible with your work for First Story, and that your messages cannot be misunderstood or misinterpreted.



- Always to refer any problems to the Child Protection Officer and to the school.

When students are invited to join the group, they will need to confirm their school, to provide their date of birth and to accept the First Story Student Group Facebook Agreement (as set out below).

When students reach 18, they will be removed from the group and invited to join the closed (but not secret) First Story Alumni Group.

*First Story Student Group Facebook Agreement*

*Welcome to the First Story Student Group! Before you join our group on Facebook, please let us know your school and date of birth. By joining the group you also agree to the rules below. We hope this will be a valuable place for you to meet other young writers in the First Story community and to discuss your writing.*

- 1 All group users must communicate publicly. No messages relating to First Story should be sent to individuals which could not be viewed by another user. This means that communication should always be through the wall on the group page.*
- 2 All users should ensure that their messages and posts are appropriate. No poor language will be tolerated.*
- 3 Members should not create personal messages about other members of the group – the purpose of the Facebook page is to have a forum for discussing writing.*
- 4 Any group member who does not abide by the above rules will have their membership of the group cancelled by First Story.*
- 5 Please recognise that these rules are designed to keep you safe, and that if they are not followed, your parent, guardian, carer or teacher may be contacted.*

Once you have read the above Policies and Guidelines carefully, please read and sign this declaration:

|  |               |                     |
|--|---------------|---------------------|
| <b>DECLARATION</b>   |               |                     |
| I confirm that I have read and understood the above Policies and Guidelines.   |               |                     |
| I undertake to comply with the above Policies and Guidelines (as they may be revised from time to time by First Story) in all respects and at all times during the course of my work for First Story.  |               |                     |
| In particular, I understand that it may become necessary in due course for me to be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service ( <b>DBS</b> ), in which case I shall promptly provide First Story with any related assistance that First Story may request. |               |                     |
| Name (please print): _____   | Signed: _____ | Dated: __ / __ / __ |

**Please then return the signed copy to First Story at:**  
**First Story Limited**  
**Omnibus Business Centre**  
**39-41 North Road**  
**London N7 9DP**