



## **Immersive Minds Child Protection Policy**

Last Update: June 2019

### **Why do we have this policy?**

We are fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children attending any of our events. We recognise our responsibility to take all reasonable steps to promote safe practice and protect children from all types of harm, abuse and exploitation.

Immersive Minds staff and volunteers will work together at all times to promote an inclusive and caring environment that embraces diversity and respects the rights of children.

### **Our Child Protection Commitment**

Immersive Minds are committed to acting in the best interests of children at all times and we see this as our paramount responsibility. Immersive Minds will create and maintain a safe environment for children and act promptly whenever we see or receive any concerns or disclosures.

We achieve this by:

- Maintaining procedures in place to protect children. These procedures include safe recruitment practice, staff induction and training, risk assessments and management responsibilities.
- Monitoring and reviewing our policies and procedures at least annually.
- All staff and volunteers will receive training in child protection and know how to:
  - Identify different forms of abuse
  - Deal with disclosures and suspicions
  - Report suspected abuse
  - Respect and listen to children
- Adopting a code of behaviour for all Immersive Minds staff and volunteers

- Ensuring that all Immersive Minds staff and volunteers work with statutory agencies when deemed necessary
- Keeping up to date with national developments relating to the care and protection of children and young people.

### **What is child abuse?**

Abuse occurs when a child or young person under the age of 18 is harmed physically, emotionally or in some other way by an adult or other child. In most cases of abuse the abuser is someone close or well known to the child such as a parent, friend or relative.

There are 4 main types of abuse:

1. **Physical Abuse** – This is actual or likely physical injury to a child such as hitting, kicking, burning or shaking as well as providing the child with alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poisonous substances.
2. **Emotional Abuse** – This is when there is harm caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection such as to cause an adverse effect on the child's emotional development. Emotional abuse also includes a lack of love and attention shown to the child including constant criticism, threats and taunting of the child.
3. **Neglect** – This occurs when the basic needs of the child are not met, for example, food, warmth and medical care or when there is a failure to protect the child from exposure to danger which results in serious impairment of a child's health or development.
4. **Sexual Abuse** – This involves the forcing or enticing of a child to take part in any kind of sexual activity, whether or not the child is aware of or consents to what is happening. It includes incest, rape, fondling, the showing of pornography or internet based inappropriate/sexual activities.

### **How do we deal with disclosures and suspicion?**

Disclosures and suspicions should always be acted upon as soon as possible. **Disclosure** is when a specific allegation of abuse is made against an individual and **Suspicion** is when a concern is expressed about abuse that may have taken place or may be about to take place, (for example if you suspect something may be happening).

**Please remember that no member of staff or volunteer will ever prejudice their position within Immersive Minds by responsibly reporting potential or suspected child abuse.**

If a child tells you that they are being abused or have been abused

- Listen to and accept what the child says
- Do not ask leading questions
- Take the alleged abuse seriously
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing by telling you
- Let the child know that you need to tell someone else
- Let the child speak freely but do not press for information
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens
- Record carefully what you have heard whilst it is still fresh in your mind, include the date and time of the conversation and any incident disclosed
- Do not investigate or confront the alleged abuser

### **What action should you take following disclosure or suspicion of abuse?**

If a member of Immersive Minds staff or volunteer has been told about, or suspects abuse, they should:

- Avoid any delay or think that 'someone else will report it'
- Report this to Catherine Morgan, Immersive Minds Director ("the Manager")
- The Manager will contact the Local Child Protection Agency (based on the area where the child is based, or the event is taking place) and follow their advice

The Manager will then listen to and follow the advice given by the Duty Social Worker at the Local Child Protection Agency.

If the Manager is unable to contact the Duty Social worker the following can be contacted:

- Emergency Social Work of the relevant agency;
- Police 101 (or in an emergency 999);
- Any registered health professional;

If the Manager feels that she/he ought to inform the parent or carer of any suspicions they should first seek advice from the Duty Social Worker before doing so to prevent the child perhaps being placed at greater risk or compromising any investigation in to the allegation.

**It is the duty of the child protection agencies not Immersive Minds staff to decide how child protection concerns, including allegations against workers, should be investigated. All matters regarding suspicions or allegations should be kept confidential and discussed only with individuals/professionals involved in the matter.**